

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000809

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/09/2016

TAGS: [IR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TOP IRANIAN SCIENCE UNIVERSITY PREPPING STUDENTS  
FOR SUCCESS ...ABROAD

Classified By: DCM NANCY MCELLOWNEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary: Two western-educated professors from Tehran,s Sharif University of Technology spoke with us separately about work conditions for faculty at the university, including recent salary increases for professors, and described the student body. They noted that for the past few years, student political activity at the campus has been virtually non-existent due to a government crackdown and student fears of being arrested. Both professors also suspected the return rate for students studying abroad was less than ten percent. End Summary.

2. (C) Following a recent visa interview, we spoke with Massood Jahanbegloo, professor and faculty member of the electrical engineering department at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran. Jahanbegloo has been teaching undergraduate-and graduate-level applied electronics at the university since 1979. In a separate exchange, we also spoke with Hashem Mahloogi, a professor and faculty member of the industrial engineering department at Sharif University since 1985. Sharif University is Iran,s pre-eminent school for sciences and engineering. Both men have relatives living in the U.S. who are petitioning for them to emigrate from Iran.

-----  
Steady Work, Little Recognition or Remuneration  
-----

3. (C) Both professors attended US universities for their postgraduate work and described their jobs in Iran as much like that of professors at other universities, with two important exceptions: there is little opportunity for interaction with their peers in other countries; and both consider their pay to be far below that of their western peers. Jahanbegloo noted that he had never traveled abroad for his work and that it was rare for his colleagues to do so. Mahloogi traveled to academic conferences in Asia and Europe, but his last such trip was in the early 1990s. Asked about foreign professors coming to teach at Sharif University, both subjects responded that Sharif does not have formal exchange programs with foreign universities and that foreign academics are not interested in coming to Sharif. Mahloogi added that formal exchange programs ended with the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and that now only the occasional foreign academic comes to give a lecture at the university and then leaves.

4. (C) According to these two, salaries for university professors throughout Iran have roughly doubled in the last year, so that Iranian professors earn approximately USD 10,000 per year. They were not sure why professors, salaries had increased so quickly and said they have not seen similar increases in other professions. Both considered their new salary levels to still be far below what they would earn working at western universities. When Jahanbegloo was asked if the new level was enough for a family of four to live comfortably, he said that it was enough to cover the basics but not to live comfortably. As an example, he went on to say that the current average home price in Tehran is three to four hundred times a university professor's annual salary. Mahloogi commented that the new salary is a definite improvement but that he had not been paid for the last three months.

5. (C) Asked if they had done research for the Iranian government, both subjects said that it was rare for their departments to do research directly for the government. Jahanbegloo said his department generally does highly theoretical research not applicable to commercial applications and occasionally investigated theoretical problems (not further specified) for the government. Mahloogi said that he had never done research for the government and that at the beginning of each fiscal year he and his colleagues submit research proposals to the university for funding.

-----  
Student Body Focused on Study and Getting Out, not Politics  
-----

6. (C) Describing Sharif University,s student body, the men said that the university only accepts the topmost students, who must pass rigorous entrance examinations. Jahanbegloo estimated the total student body at about 5,000, while

Mahloogi put it between 7 and 8 thousand students. Over the years both professors have seen hundreds of their students go abroad for advanced studies but said that very few ever return to Iran (Jahanbegloo estimated more than ninety percent of students who go abroad for post-graduate work do not come back). According to the professors, teaching and work opportunities are far better outside of Iran and they have former students now teaching at top universities in the US.

17. (C) Both men said that student political activity had been virtually non-existent for the last few years but differed somewhat in their opinions as to why. Jahanbegloo said students have been scared since the 1999 crackdown on student demonstrations and that now they are even less inclined to political action due to their uncertainty about what Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will do next. Jahanbegloo said that Sharif University's focus on hard sciences (as opposed to political science and other humanities) may account in part for the lack of political activity; however, Mahloogi said that prior to the government crackdown, Sharif students were among the most politically active in Iran. Mahloogi felt that in the last two years, right-wing student groups have become more organized on campus and enjoy the favor of the government. He believes that liberal student activists face serious threat of being informed upon by the right-wing groups and thus refrain from political activity.

(C) Comment: This description of the current atmosphere at Sharif University seems to indicate that academic circles there are focused on getting what they can from the university and then getting out of Iran. If the mood at Sharif University is indicative of the situation at other Iranian universities, then these institutions of higher learning, often looked to as possible sources of opposition to the hard-line policies of the Islamic Republic, may not prove to be the hoped for catalysts of political and social reform. End Comment.  
WILSON